

\*\*\* NETANSWERS INTERNET EXTRA \*\*\*  
\*\*\* Number 52: Online Calendars \*\*\*

Around the middle of every December, I drive to the stationery store to buy a calendar for the upcoming year. Actually, I get two -- a by-the-week pocket calendar and a by-the-month wall calendar. This year, I'm going to try something new: keeping track of appointments and to-do lists with an online calendar rather than on paper.

Even for a guy like me, who is on the Net practically all the time, moving from a traditional calendar to an online one seemed wrong at first. But I've warmed to the idea. I can't say for sure that I won't revert to my paper-based, scrawled to-do lists by year's end -- but am giving the online calendar a try because it does have advantages. For one, there's no little book to lose. For someone who loses his wallet or car keys three times each week, that's reason enough to switch. Whether you're at home or at the office or anywhere else, just find a web browser to check your schedule. Plus, online calendars can send e-mail to remind you of appointments ahead of time.

Of all the online calendar services I've tried, I like Yahoo Calendar (<http://calendar.yahoo.com>) the best. It's fast, the interface is intuitive and it offers plenty of features. Yahoo Calendar has two types of events: appointments (events scheduled for a certain time) and to-do list items (deadline events that must be completed by a certain date). You can view your life as a daily, weekly, monthly, or annual calendar. You can also schedule repeating events, for those tricky appointments that take place every other week or on the third Sunday of the month every three months.

If you need a gentle reminder, you can have Yahoo Calendar e-mail you prior to an appointment -- from two weeks up to five minutes beforehand. If you're truly wired, the service can even send the reminder to your pager or cell phone. Yahoo Calendar can also share data with your Palm Pilot and offline scheduling software like Microsoft Outlook.

If Yahoo Calendar doesn't float your boat, try Appoint.net (<http://www.appoint.net>). This free calendar service offers a plethora of features for scheduling your life, including various ways to view your calendar and share data. The interface is quite different from Yahoo Calendar, populated by little on-screen buttons that you'll love -- or not. Appoint.net offers appointments and to-do lists, and can send e-mail reminders of important events.

The site shines when it comes to scheduling meetings. If your colleagues also use Appoint.net, the site will help coordinate meeting times. If you need to schedule a meeting with six other people, fill out a form listing the people and several proposed times. Each person then tells the site when they will be able to meet and Appoint.net will tell you when everyone is available. The site even makes allowances for different time zones (useful, for instance, if you're scheduling a conference call).

My biggest complaint about Appoint.net is that it automatically logs you out after 20 minutes of inactivity. I suppose that would be a good thing if your computer is in an environment where others might walk up and peek at your calendar, but in a home office or other private environment the time-out is just an inconvenience.

If you need to be reminded of the occasional meeting but don't want to put your whole life on an online calendar, give Remind-U-Mail a try. Remind-U-Mail (<http://calendar.stwing.upenn.edu>) will e-mail you in advance of meetings and deadlines. It is not as polished nor as feature-laden as the other calendar tools. This one seems less like a big corporate service and more like a student's project (which, in fact, it is). It is particularly easy to use, without a lot of options to fuss with: just tell it the name and date of an event and it will send you an e-mail reminder.

I'm not suggesting that you burn paper calendar just yet -- but why not give an online calendar a try for a week or two? It could change how you work... or at least save you a trip to the stationary store.

Finally, here are two other calendar-related sites to help you pass the time, count the days, or look to the future:

Frequently Asked Questions about Calendars is a fascinating document for anyone interested in horology. (<http://www.pip.dknet.dk/~pip10160/calendar.html>) It provides information about the Christian, Hebrew, and Islamic calendars, as well as overviews of the French Revolutionary, Mayan, and Chinese calendars. It answers questions like: has the year always started on 1 January? What is the origin of the names of the months? Was Jesus born in the year 0?

Calendar Zone calls itself a "comprehensive categorized calendar catalog currently containing countless correlating connections." I'll just call it an impressive list of links to calendar-related sites. Check it out: <http://www.calendarzone.com>.

=\*=\*= SITES MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE =\*=\*=

Yahoo Calendar: <http://calendar.yahoo.com>

Appoint.net: <http://www.appoint.net>

Remind-U-Mail: <http://calendar.stwing.upenn.edu>

Frequently Asked Questions about Calendars: <http://www.pip.dknet.dk/~pip10160/calendar.html>

Calendar Zone: <http://www.calendarzone.com>

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The NetAnswers Internet Extra is free to all CompuServe members. It's available in the Internet New Users Forum (GO INETNEW) in file library 11, "NetAnswers".

Got comments or ideas for future issues? We want to hear 'em. Just send a message to [savetz@compuserve.com](mailto:savetz@compuserve.com) (74774,2725).

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